

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:

Oct. 21, 2009

For More Information, Contact:

Kirby Kruger
North Dakota Department of Health
Phone: 701.328.2378
E-mail: kkruiger@nd.gov

Department of Health Offers Guidance To People Who Think They May Have Influenza

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health is providing guidance to people who think they may have influenza, according to State Health Officer Terry Dwelle, M.D.

“As we get more cases of influenza in the state, our clinics are filling up with people seeking medical care,” Dwelle said. “While we don’t want to discourage people from seeing a doctor if they are sick, we do want to provide guidance to people about the appropriate time to seek medical care. It’s important that our health-care system is available to take care of those who are at high-risk of complications from influenza.”

The Department of Health is providing the following guidance for people who may have influenza:

What should I do if I get sick?

If you get sick with flu-like symptoms, you should stay home and avoid contact with other people (except to get medical care if needed). Most people with H1N1 influenza have had mild illness and have not needed medical care or antiviral drugs. The same is true of seasonal flu.

Who is more at risk from the flu?

Some people are more likely to get flu complications, and they should talk to a health-care provider about whether they need to be examined if they get flu symptoms. They are:

- Children younger than 5, and especially children younger than 2.
- People 65 and older.
- Pregnant women.
- People who have medical conditions such as cancer; lung disease; asthma; diabetes; heart disease; kidney disorders; liver disorders; nervous system, brain or spinal cord

-- more --

disorders; muscular dystrophy and multiple sclerosis; and weakened immune systems (including people with AIDS).

If you think you may be in a high-risk group, you should call your doctor.

What are the emergency warning signs of flu sickness?

There are emergency warning signs that indicate you should get medical care right away.

In children:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing.
- Bluish skin color.
- Not drinking enough fluids.
- Not waking up or not interacting.
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held.
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough.
- Fever with rash.

In adults:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath.
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen.
- Sudden dizziness.
- Confusion.
- Severe or persistent vomiting.

Do I need to go to the emergency room if I am only a little sick?

The emergency room should be used for people who are very sick. You should not go to the emergency room if you are only mildly ill. If you have the emergency warning signs of flu sickness, (see previous question) you should go to the emergency room. If you get sick with flu symptoms and are at high risk of flu complications or you are concerned about your illness, call your health care provider for advice. If you go to the emergency room and you are not sick with the flu, you may catch it from people who do have it.

How long should I stay home if I'm sick?

You should stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care.

(Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine, such as Tylenol®.)

You should stay home from work, school, travel, shopping, social events, and public gatherings.

What should I do while I'm sick?

Stay away from others as much as possible to keep from making them sick. If you must leave home, for example to get medical care, wear a facemask if you have one, or cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue. Get plenty of rest. Drink clear liquids. And wash your hands often to keep from spreading flu to others.

More information about influenza is available at the Department of Health's influenza website, including how to care for people who are sick. Visit www.ndflu.com.

-- 30 --

Please note: To access archived news releases and other information, visit the North Dakota Department of Health Press Room at www.nddohpressroom.gov.

600 E. Boulevard Ave. Dept. 301, Bismarck, North Dakota 58505-0200
Phone: 701.328.2372 Fax: 701.328.4727 E-mail: health@nd.gov

Visit the health department home page at www.ndhealth.gov.